

Key Autopsy Photos Feared Kept From Warren Inquiry

Suit Ann 7/25/68

New York, March 24 (Reuters)—Members of the Warren Commission set up to investigate the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 tried but failed to see vital autopsy photographs to clarify "confusing" evidence about what bullets struck the President, it was charged today.

In a copyright article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, David Wise, a Washington journalist, said the commission considered evidence about the bullets as "totally inconclusive."

Transcripts of the commission hearings were declassified by the National Archives at Wise's request after being filed as "top secret" for four years.

"Totally Inconclusive"

"At the panel's third meeting, on December 16, 1963, several commission members complained that the initial [FBI] report on the assassination failed to clear up the question of what bullets struck the President and Texas Gov. John Connally," the article said.

During this session, Chief Justice Warren, the commission chairman, called the evidence on the bullets "totally inconclusive." He was supported by John J. McCloy, a committee member and former board chairman of the Chase Manhattan Bank, who said, "this is looming up as the most confusing thing that we've got."

More than four months later, at the April 30, 1964, meeting following testimony by Connally, J. Lee Rankin, commission counsel, said the bullet wounds still presented a "serious problem" and urged that at least one commission member and a doctor should examine the autopsy photographs.

"Perfunctory" Attempts

Describing attempts to view these photographs as "perfunctory," the article added, "There is no further mention of the autopsy photos in the classified transcripts. The commission never saw them."

Under an agreement with the Kennedy family, the pictures

and X-rays of the body will not be released until 1971, and then only to persons approved by the family.

Questioning The Widow

The article also said that when Warren urged his colleagues to rely on the FBI and other Government agencies in gathering facts, McCloy dissented, saying their reports might be "self-serving" as there was "a potential culpability here on the part of the Secret Service and even the FBI."

The article also said Senator Russell (D., Ga.) informed the six other commission members at their first meeting that he had told President Johnson "fifty years from today people

will be saying he [President Johnson] had something to do with it so he could be President."

The commission "agonized" for months over how and when to question Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy. When McCloy pushed for an immediate interview with her, while events were still fresh in her mind, Warren asked him caustically, "Do you think she'll forget?"

Warren finally interviewed Mrs. Kennedy nearly six months later, but her references to the President's wounds were later deleted from the record and remain closed.

Conclusion Challenged

In two previous articles, the *Post* has challenged the Warren Commission's conclusion that Oswald acted alone when he shot the President.

When an article last November presented the case for three assassins firing four shots from three separate positions, the magazine said in an editorial then that "we declare once again that the case is not closed."